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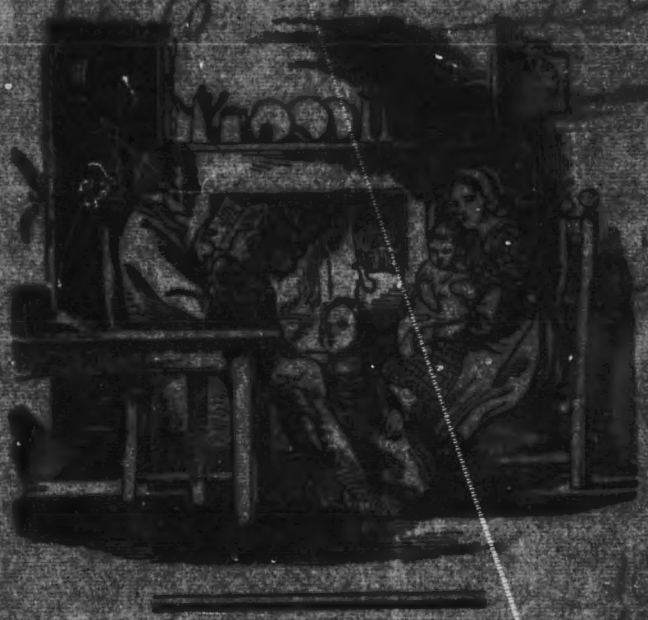

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DANGERS ON THE ICE

OFF THE

COAST OF LABRADOR:

WITH SOME INTERESTING PARTICULARS RESPECTING
THE NATIVES OF THAT COUNTRY

LONDON:
THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY;
56, PATERNOSTER ROW, AND 65, ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD;
AND SOLD BY THE BOOKSELLERS.

DANGERS ON THE ICE

OFF THE

COAST OF LABRADOR.

THE Moravian missionaries on the coast of Labrador, (a part of North America,) for many years suffered much from the severity of the climate, and the savage disposition of the natives. In the year 1782, the brethren Liebisch and Turner experienced a remarkable preservation of their lives; the particulars show the dangers the missionaries underwent in pursuing their labours. To this narrative are added some further particulars, which show their labours were not without success.

Early on March the 11th, they left Nain to go to Okkak, a journey of 150 miles. They travelled in a sledge drawn by dogs, and another sledge with Esquimaux joined them; the whole party consisting of five men, one woman, and a child. The weather was remarkably fine, and the track over the frozen sea was in the best order, so that they travelled at the rate of six or seven miles an hour. All therefore were in good spirits, hoping to reach Okkak in two or three days. Having passed the islands in the bay, they kept at a considerable distance from the shore, both to gain the smoothest part of the ice, and to avoid the high and rocky promontory of Kiglapeit. About eight o'clock they met a sledge with Esquimaux, driving towards the land, who intimated that it might be well not to proceed; but as the missionaries saw no reason for it, they paid no regard to these hints, and went on. In a while, however, their own Esquimaux remarked, that there was a swell under the ice. It was then hardly perceptible, except on applying the ear close to the ice, when a hollow grating and roaring noise was heard. The weather remained clear, and no sudden change was expected. But the motion of the sea under the ice had grown so perceptible, as rather to alarm our travellers, and they began to think it prudent to keep closer to the shore. The ice in many places had

fissures and cracks, some of which formed chasms of one or two feet wide; but as they are not uncommon, and the dogs easily leap over them, the sledge following without danger, they are terrible only to new comers.

As soon as the sun declined, the wind increased and rose to a storm. The snow was driven about by whirlwinds, both on the ice and from off the peaks of the high mountains, and filled the air. At the same time the swell had increased so much, that its effects upon the ice became very extraordinary and alarming. The sledges, instead of gliding along smoothly upon an even surface, sometimes ran with violence after the dogs, and shortly after seemed with difficulty to ascend the rising hill; for the elasticity of so vast a body of ice, of many leagues square, supported by a troubled sea, though in some places three or four yards in thickness, would, in some degree, occasion a motion not unlike that of a sheet of paper upon the surface of a rippling stream. Noises were now likewise heard in many directions, like the report of cannon, owing to the bursting of the ice at some distance.

The Esquimaux drove with all haste towards the shore, as it plainly appeared the ice would break, and disperse in the open sea. When the sledges approached the coast, the prospect before them was truly terrific. The ice, having broken loose from the rocks, was forced up and down, grinding and breaking into a thousand pieces against the precipices, with a tremendous noise, which added to the raging of the wind, and the snow driving about in the air, nearly deprived the travellers of the power of hearing and seeing anything distinctly.

To make the land at any risk, was now the only hope left, but it was with the utmost difficulty the frighted dogs could be forced forward, the whole body of the ice sinking frequently below the rocks, then rising above them. As the only moment to land was that when the ice gained the level of the shore, the attempt was extremely nice and hazardous. However, by God's mercy, it succeeded; both sledges gained the shore, and were drawn up the beach, though with much difficulty.

The travellers had hardly time to reflect with gratitude to God for their safety, when that part of the ice from which they had just now made good their landing, burst

33183

asunder, and the water forcing itself from below, covered and precipitated it into the sea. In an instant, the whole mass of ice, extending for several miles from the coast, and as far as the eye could reach, burst, and was overwhelmed by the rolling waves. The sight was tremendous and awfully grand; the large fields of ice raising themselves out of the water, striking against each other, and plunging into the deep, with a violence not to be described, and a noise like the discharge of innumerable batteries of heavy guns. The darkness of the night, the roaring of the wind and the sea, and the dashing of the waves and ice against the rocks, filled the travellers with sensations of awe and horror, so as almost to deprive them of the power of utterance. They stood overwhelmed with astonishment at their miraculous escape, and even the heathen Esquimaux expressed gratitude to God for their deliverance.

The Esquimaux now began to build a hut with snow, about thirty paces from the beach, but before they had finished their work, the waves reached the place where the sledges were secured, and they were with difficulty saved from being washed into the sea. About nine o'clock all of them crept into the snow-house, thanking God for this place of refuge; for the wind was piercingly cold, and so violent that it required great strength to stand against it.

Before they entered this habitation, they could not help once more turning their eyes to the sea, which was now free from ice. They beheld with horror, mingled with gratitude for their safety, the enormous waves driving furiously before the wind and approaching the shore, where with dreadful noise they dashed against the rocks, foaming and filling the air with spray. The whole company now got their supper, and having sung an evening hymn in the Esquimaux language, lay down to rest about ten o'clock. The Esquimaux were soon fast asleep, but brother Leibisch could not get any rest, partly on account of the dreadful roaring of the wind, and partly owing to a sore throat, which gave him much pain. His wakefulness proved the deliverance of the whole party from sudden destruction. About two o'clock in the morning, he perceived some salt water dropping from the roof of the snow-house upon his lips. On a sudden, a tremendous wave broke close to the

house, discharging a quantity of water into it; a second soon followed, and carried away the slab of snow placed as a door before the entrance. The missionaries having roused the sleeping Esquimaux, they instantly set to work. One of them with a knife cut a passage through the house, and each seizing some part of the baggage, threw it out on a higher part of the beach; brother Turner assisting them. Brother Leibisch and the women and child fled to a neighbouring eminence. The latter were wrapped up by the Esquimaux in a large skin, and the former took shelter behind a rock, for it was im ossible to stand against the wind, snow, and sleet. Scarcely had the company retreated, when an enormous wave carried away the whole house.

They now found themselves a second time delivered from the most imminent danger of death; but the remaining part of the night, before the Esquimaux could seek and find another and safer place for a snow-house, were hours of great distress and very painful reflections. Before the day dawned, the Esquimaux cut a hole in a large drift of snow, to serve as a shelter to the woman and child and the two missionaries. Brother Leibisch, however, owing to the pain in his throat, could not bear the closeness of the air, and was obliged to sit down at the entrance, being covered with skins, to guard him against the cold. As soon as it was light, they built another snow-house, and miserable as such an accommodation must be, they were glad and thankful to creep into it.

The missionaries had taken but a small stock of provisions with them, merely sufficient for the short journey to Okkak. Joel, his wife and child, and Kassigiak, a heathen sorcerer, who were with them, had nothing. They were obliged, therefore, to divide the small stock into daily portions, especially as there appeared no hopes of soon quitting this place, and reaching any dwellings. They, therefore, resolved to serve out no more than a biscuit and a half per day to each. The missionaries remained in the snow-house, and every day endeavoured to boil so much water over their lamps, as might supply them with two cups of coffee a piece. Through mercy they were preserved in good health, and, quite unexpectedly, brother Leibisch recovered on the first day of his sore throat. The

Esquimaux also kept up their spirits, and even Kassigiak, though a wild heathen, declared, that it was proper to be thankful that they were still alive; adding, that if they had remained a little longer on the ice yesterday all their bones would have been broken in a short time.

Towards noon of the 13th, the weather cleared up, and the sea was seen as far as the eye could reach, quite clear and free from ice; but the weather being very stormy, the Esquimaux could not quit the snow-house, which made them very low-spirited and melancholy. They, however, possess one advantage, namely, the power of going to sleep when they please, and if need be, they will sleep for days and nights together.

In the evening of the 15th, the sky became clear, and their hopes revived. Mark and Joel went out to reconnoitre, and reported that the ice had acquired a considerable degree of solidity, and might soon afford a safe passage. The poor dogs had now nearly fasted four days, but in the prospect of a speedy release, the missionaries allowed to each a few morsels of food. The temperature of the air having been rather mild, it occasioned a new source of distress, for, from the warmth of the inhabitants, the roof of the snow-house began to melt, which occasioned a continual dropping, and by degrees made everything soaking wet. The missionaries considered this the greatest hardship they had to endure, for they had not a dry thread about them, nor a dry place to lie in.

On the 16th, early, the sky cleared, but the fine particles of snow were driven about like clouds. Their present distress dictated the necessity of venturing something to reach the habitations of men, and yet they were rather afraid of passing over the newly frozen sea, and could not determine what to do. Brother Turner went again with Mark to examine the ice, and both seemed satisfied that it had acquired sufficient strength. They therefore came to a final resolution to return to Nain, committing themselves to the protection of the Lord.

Notwithstanding the wind had considerably increased, accompanied with heavy showers of snow and sleet, they ventured to set off at half-past ten o'clock in the forenoon of the 19th. Mark ran all the way round Kiglapeit before the sledge, to find a good track, and about one o'clock,

through God's mercy, they were out of danger, and reached the bay. Here they found a good track upon smooth ice, and made a meal upon the remnant of their provisions. Thus refreshed, they resolved to proceed without stopping till they reached Nain, where they arrived at twelve o'clock at night.

It may easily be conceived with what gratitude to God the whole family at Nain bade them welcome. During the storm, they had considered with some dread, what might be the fate of their brethren, though its violence was not felt so much there. Added to this, the hints of the Esquimaux had considerably increased their apprehensions for their safety, and their fears began to get the better of their hopes. All, therefore, joined most favourably in praise and thanksgiving to God for this signal deliverance.

For many years the conversion of the heathen in Labrador not only proceeded very slowly, but was attended with many discouraging circumstances. The missionaries had patiently persevered in preaching to the natives, and watching every opportunity to make them attentive to the best interests of their souls; but reaped little fruit from their labours. Visits were frequent, and there was in general no want of hearers to address, but they showed no disposition to be instructed. If even a salutary impression was occasionally made on their minds, it was not abiding. Some families were indeed collected in the different settlements, but after staying there during the winter, they mostly moved away again in summer, and apparently forgot all they had heard.

Before the close of the year 1804, a new period commenced. A fire from the Lord was kindled among the Esquimaux, accompanied with the clearest evidence of being the effect of the operations of the Divine Spirit on their hearts. It commenced at Hopedale, the very place which presented the most discouraging prospect.

When the Esquimaux of that place returned from their summer excursions, the missionaries were delighted to find, that they not only had been preserved from sinful practices, but had greatly increased in the knowledge of Divine truth. They had obtained an humbling insight into the corruption and deceitfulness of their hearts, and the wretched state of a person void of faith in Christ. This

constrained them to cry for mercy, and gladly to accept salvation on the terms of the gospel: and some afforded encouraging hopes that they had found forgiveness of sins in the blood of Christ, by which their souls were filled with peace in believing. Out of the abundance of the heart their mouths spake of the love and power of Jesus. Their artless but energetic declarations impressed the rest of the inhabitants. They began to feel the necessity of true conversion; and, in a short time, all the adults appeared earnestly to seek peace with God. Even several of the children were awakened. The missionaries were daily visited by people, who either inquired "what they must do to be saved," or testified of the grace of God manifested to their souls.

The progress of the mission, in the sequel, supplies sufficient proof that the effect of the gospel, just related, was not a wild fire, or the mere consequence of a momentary impression, but a Divine work wrought in the hearts of the natives by the Spirit of God himself. The missionaries frequently mention the attention and diligence shown in the schools, both by adults and children, and the delight and fervour with which they engage in their family devotions, and in conversation with each other respecting the influence of the gospel on their own souls. Their behaviour at public worship likewise very strikingly differed from that of former years, with regard to the eagerness with which they now attended the house of God, and their deportment during the performance of Divine service. On one occasion the missionaries remarked, "We no longer see bold, undaunted heathens sitting before us, with defiance or ridicule in their looks; but people expecting a blessing, desirous to experience the power of the word of life, shedding tears of repentance, and their whole appearance evincing devotion and earnest inquiry."

Christians! does not this narrative present us with some useful subjects for reflection?

THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY;
56, PATERNOSTER-ROW, AND 65 ST PAUL'S CHURCHYARD.

THIS MAY BE YOUR LAST SABBATH.

On a sabbath in October, 1836, two visitors entered an apartment in which they found a husband, wife, and five children, whom they addressed on the importance of observing God's laws, the necessity of a change of heart, and the consequences of dying without it, John iii. 3, on the frailty of health, and the uncertainty of life. The husband replied, "I serve God as well as I can: God is a God of mercy; I am not going to die yet, for there is nothing the matter with me;" and with a smile he added, "I will promise to go to the house of God some day." Much was said, and the visit was closed with these solemn words, "Remember, this may be your last sabbath."

In a day or two after, the poor man was suddenly overtaken by a disease which baffled medical skill. He felt his danger; he cried, "The visitor! the visitor!" But the visitor's address was not known. He then cried out, "The visitor's tract! oh, then, give me the visitor's tract!" He read it, and its continued reading was interrupted only by his cries for "Pardon! pardon!" which, on Friday, were silenced by death.

Reader! on what are you resting to deliver your soul from the guilt of sin, and the condemnation and curse of God's broken moral law? Rom. x. 10—19. Is it on serving God as well as you can? What man living has ever done as well as he could, or as well as he might? Remember, that by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified, Rom. iii. 20. Do you rely on the mere mercy of God? Recollect, God's justice must be satisfied before his mercy can be extended to you; for his justice spared not his own Son when the iniquity of his people was laid upon him. Oh flee from all vain delusions. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, through whom God is both just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus, Rom. iii. 26. Pray from God the enlightening influences of his Holy Spirit. Delay not; health and life may come to an end this day. Say not, "I'll believe, I'll repent, I'll turn, I'll obey some other sabbath." "Boast not thyself of to-morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth," Prov. xxvii. 1. Act on the possibility of this being "your last sabbath."

EVENING HYMN.

Glory to Thee, my God, this night,
For all the blessings of the light:
Keep me, O keep me, King of kings,
Beneath thine own almighty wings.

Forgive me, Lord, for thy dear Son,
The ills that I this day have done;
That, with the world, myself, and Thee,
I, ere I sleep, at peace may be.

Teach me to live, that I may dread
The grave as little as my bed:
Teach me to die, that so I may
Rise glorious at the judgment day.

Oh may my soul on Thee repose,
And may sweet sleep mine eyelids close;
Sleep which may me more vigorous make
To serve my God when I awake.

When in the night I sleepless lie,
My soul with heavenly thoughts supply;
Let no ill dreams disturb my rest,
No powers of darkness me molest.

Let my blest Guardian, while I sleep,
His watchful station near me keep;
My heart with love celestial fill,
And guard me from th' approach of ill.

Lord, let my soul for ever share
The bliss of Thy paternal care:
'Tis heaven on earth, 'tis heaven above,
To see thy face and sing thy love.

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him, all creatures here below:
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.